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**ANTECEDENTS AND CONSEQUENCES OF  
RELATIONSHIP QUALITY AMONG MALAYSIANS  
ONLINE ENTREPRENEURS**

**MUNIRAH BINTI KHAMARUDIN**



**UUM**  
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QUALITY AMONG MALAYSIAN ONLINE ENTREPRENEURS**

**By:**

**MUNIRAH BINTI KHAMARUDIN**



**Thesis submitted to  
School of Business Management,  
Universiti Utara Malaysia,  
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## ABSTRACT

Relationship marketing has been viewed as being imperative to the success of business firms in line with the growing understanding that acquiring new customers is far more expensive than maintaining existing ones. In response to this, relationship quality plays a vital role in shaping the business relationship. Hence, this study aimed to examine the influence of antecedent factors such as service quality, service recovery, price fairness, relationship benefits and relational dependence on online entrepreneurs' relationship quality. Furthermore, this study examined two consequences of relationship quality, namely customer retention and word-of-mouth. A research framework was established based on existing literature to test the relationship among these variables. The Social Exchange Theory was employed to explain the relationship between the variables being studied. In order to empirically test the research framework of this study, data were collected by employing a survey instrument. In conducting this research, online entrepreneurs were selected using the simple random sampling technique. A total of 351 questionnaires were distributed to online entrepreneurs, out of which 117 were returned, representing a 32% response rate. The data collected were analyzed using the Statistical Package for Social Science (SPSS) and PLS-SEM to test the hypotheses. The results from the structural model supported the hypothesized paths; service quality, price fairness, and relationship benefits influenced relationship quality. Furthermore, the hypothesized path maintained that customer retention and word- of- mouth were the consequences of relationship quality. However, the hypothesized path for service recovery influencing relationship quality and relational dependence influencing relationship quality were not supported. Based on these findings, the implications, limitations of the study and future directions are discussed.

**Keywords:** relationship marketing, relationship quality, online entrepreneur.

## ABSTRAK

Pemasaran perhubungan telah dianggap penting bagi kejayaan sesebuah perniagaan. Hal ini seiring dengan pemahaman yang semakin meningkat bahawa memperoleh pelanggan baharu jauh lebih bernilai daripada mengekalkan pelanggan sedia ada. Sebagai tindak balas kepada perkara ini, kualiti hubungan memainkan peranan penting dalam membentuk hubungan perniagaan. Oleh itu, kajian ini bertujuan untuk menyiasat pengaruh faktor-faktor terdahulu seperti kualiti perkhidmatan, pemulihan perkhidmatan, keadilan harga, faedah perhubungan dan kebergantungan perhubungan yang mungkin mempengaruhi kualiti hubungan usahawan atas talian. Di samping itu, kajian ini meneliti dua kesan kualiti hubungan iaitu pengekaln pelanggan dan janji manis. Satu kerangka kajian dibangunkan berdasarkan kajian literatur sedia ada untuk menguji hubungan antara pemboleh ubah-pemboleh ubah kajian. Teori pertukaran sosial telah digunakan untuk menjelaskan hubungan antara pemboleh ubah yang dikaji. Bagi menguji secara empirikal rangka penyelidikan kajian ini, data dikumpulkan dengan menggunakan kaedah bancian. Dalam menjalankan kajian ini, usahawan dalam talian dipilih menggunakan teknik persampelan rawak mudah. Sejumlah 351 borang soal selidik telah diedarkan kepada usahawan dalam talian, dan hanya 117 telah dikembalikan. Ini mewakili kadar maklum balas sebanyak 32 peratus. Data yang dikumpul dianalisis menggunakan Pakej Statistik untuk Sains Sosial (SPSS) dan PLS-SEM untuk menguji hipotesis-hipotesis kajian. Dapatan model struktur menyokong laluan hipotesis berikut iaitu kualiti perkhidmatan, keadilan harga, dan faedah perhubungan yang mempengaruhi kualiti hubungan. Selain itu, laluan hipotesis juga menyokong pengekaln pelanggan dan janji manis adalah hasil daripada kualiti hubungan. Walau bagaimanapun, laluan hipotesis iaitu pemulihan perkhidmatan mempengaruhi pengaruh kualiti hubungan dan ketergantungan relasi mempengaruhi kualiti hubungan pula tidak disokong. Akhir sekali, berdasarkan dapatan kajian ini, implikasi kajian, batasan kajian dan arah masa hadapan kajian turut dibincangkan.

**Kata kunci:** Pemasaran perhubungan, kualiti hubungan, usahawan dalam talian.

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# **CHAPTER ONE**

## **INTRODUCTION**

### **1.1 Background of the study**

The success or failure of a business lies in many factors. The factors can be in the environment, market or in the strategic planning. In order to win the customers' share in the competitive business market, a business needs to formulate strategies that will keep and have a bond with them in the long run. A business needs to interact with their customer by looking beyond the traditional strategy mix. Therefore, companies are emphasizing more and more on relationship marketing to create a bond with their customers.

Relationship marketing is becoming an integral part of marketing strategy which contributing towards acquiring strong competitive advantage. It is imperative to have a good relationship between buyer and supplier. It can be seen that problems will arise if the quality of the relationship is not in good term. It can lead to many problems and consequently disturb the supply value chain. For instance, abruption of supply may incur a hike in price. This can be seen in the case of unavailability of fish supply in which the retailers need to pay the supplier additional RM 2 per kilogram of fish as reported in Harian Metro (2012). This condition will affect the end consumers

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## **APPENDICES**

### **Appendix A: Research Questionnaire**

#### **MAIL SURVEY COVER LETTER**

Dear Survey Recipient:

I am a doctoral candidate at School of Business Management, Universiti Utara Malaysia. Currently, I am conducting a study on relationship quality between the online entrepreneurs and courier services provider. For the purpose of this study, your organization has been chosen as one of the survey respondent. Therefore, I would like to ask your assistance in completing the attached questionnaire. The results from this study will be used to complete my PhD thesis.

The study being conducted in order to understand retailer-supplier relationships in order to provide your organization with ideas on how to maintain and improve relationships with the suppliers specifically the courier services provider. I believe it is important to look at the quality of retailer-supplier relationships from your points of view. I am hoping that your experience will provide me with valuable insights into the nature of this relationship.

The attached survey should not be difficult to complete and should not take more than 15-20 minutes to finish. You only need to circle the answers and answer a few short questions. A postage paid envelope has been included for you to return the completed survey. Returning the questionnaire is your consent to participate.

Your participation in this survey is voluntarily and you are not obliged to answer any question which you feel uncomfortable. All responses will remain confidential. Along with this, I attached a complimentary souvenir as a gesture of my appreciation for your time, attention and cooperation. I would also like to express my gratitude and happy to share the results of

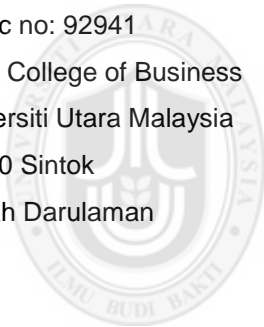
this study with you when it is completed. If you are interested in receiving a copy of the results, do attach your business card to the survey when returning in to me.

I would appreciate if you could complete this survey as soon as possible and preferably within a week of receiving it. Thank you so much for taking time to read this letter and I hope you can find time to complete the attached survey. Should you have any query, please call me at 019-4422257 or email at [irahdin@uum.edu.my](mailto:irahdin@uum.edu.my).

Your sincerely,

.....

Munirah binti Khamarudin  
Doctoral Candidate  
Matric no: 92941  
UUM College of Business  
Universiti Utara Malaysia  
06010 Sintok  
Kedah Darulaman



## MAIL SURVEY QUESTIONNAIRE

Dear respondent, please bear in mind that this study is completely voluntarily and confidential. All of your responses shall not be revealed to your suppliers, employers and competitors. In retailer-supplier relationships, retailers and suppliers can be different in terms of their dependency upon each other. Please think of ONE courier services provider with whom you have been doing business for more than six months, or who accounted for at least 10% of business transacted with you during the past six months or you can even think



## Research on Courier Services Provider Relationship Quality

This questionnaire seeks information regarding the courier services provider relationship quality from online entrepreneurs' perspective. All the information provided is meant for research purposes only and will be treated with strictest confidentiality by the researcher. Names will never appear in any written form. Please answer all questions using the guidelines provided in each section. Thank you for participation. **Please state (/) for your answers.**

### Section 1: Profile of respondent

1. Gender

	Male
	Female

2. Age: \_\_\_\_\_.

3. Highest education level.

	SPM/STPM
	Diploma
	Degree
	Master/PhD

4. How many years in selling product online? \_\_\_\_\_ years.

5. Type of product/services.

	Clothing
	Cosmetics
	Wedding planner
	Travel agent
	Mobile phone and accessories
	Electrical appliances
	Handbags
	Other:

6. Type of social media used:

	Facebook
	Instagram
	Blogs
	Tweeter
	Other:

7. Which courier services provider you mostly used during the past 12 months:

Frequency Company	Everyday	Once a week	Fortnightly	Monthly
Pos Laju				
Nationwide				
Skynet				
Fedex				
Other:				

**Section2: Relationship Quality (RQ) - Please circle (O) for your answers.**

Please assess the following statement to describe your feeling towards the courier services provider **with reference on question 7 in Section 1 (Most frequent used)**.

Strongly Disagree      Strongly Agree

T1	We can count of this courier services provider through on commitments.	1	2	3	4	5
T2	There is no hidden agendas in this relationship.	1	2	3	4	5
T3	We respect this company's judgement.	1	2	3	4	5
T4	We trust each other.	1	2	3	4	5
T5	We think this company would try to take advantage of our relationship	1	2	3	4	5
S1	Overall, we believe that we are both quite satisfied with our working relationship.	1	2	3	4	5
S2	This is among the best relationships that we've experienced.	1	2	3	4	5
S3	We think this courier services provider is pleased with our relationship.	1	2	3	4	5
S4	We would say our relationship couldn't be much better.	1	2	3	4	5
S5	We are not happy with this relationship.	1	2	3	4	5
C1	We believed that we are both committed to this relationship.	1	2	3	4	5
C2	We have a strong sense of loyalty to this courier service provider.	1	2	3	4	5
C3	This courier service provider is prepared to make short-term sacrifices to maintain our relationship.	1	2	3	4	5
C4	We believed we both view our relationship as a long-term partnership.	1	2	3	4	5



### Section 3: Service Quality

Please assess the service quality you have with your courier service provider **with reference on question 7 in Section 1 (Most frequent used)**.

Strongly  
Disagree                      Strongly  
Agree

R1	The courier services provider provides services as promised.	1	2	3	4	5
R2	The courier services provider is dependable in handling customers' service problems.	1	2	3	4	5
R3	The courier services provider performs services right the first time.	1	2	3	4	5
R4	The courier services provider provides services at the promised time.	1	2	3	4	5
R5	The courier services provider maintains error-free records.	1	2	3	4	5
RP1	The courier services provider keeps customers informed about when services will be performed.	1	2	3	4	5
RP2	The courier services provider has a prompt service to customers.	1	2	3	4	5
RP3	The courier services provider is willing to help customers.	1	2	3	4	5
RP4	The courier services provider is ready to respond to customers' requests.	1	2	3	4	5
A1	The employees instill confidence in customers.	1	2	3	4	5
A2	The employees always make customers feel safe in their transactions.	1	2	3	4	5
A3	The employees are consistently courteous	1	2	3	4	5

A4	The employees have the knowledge to answer customer questions.	1	2	3	4	5
E1	The employees give customers individual attention.	1	2	3	4	5
E2	The employees who deal with us always show that they care.	1	2	3	4	5
E3	The employees always have the customer's best interest at heart.	1	2	3	4	5
E4	The employees always understand my needs as their customers.	1	2	3	4	5
E5	The courier services provider has convenient business hours.	1	2	3	4	5
T1	The courier services provider have up-to-date equipment	1	2	3	4	5
T2	The physical facilities are visually appealing	1	2	3	4	5
T3	The employees look neat and professional in appearance.	1	2	3	4	5
T4	The appearances of the physical facilities are associated with the service.	1	2	3	4	5

#### Section 4: Service Recovery

Please assess the service recovery you have with your courier service provider **with reference on question 7 in Section 1 (Most frequent used)**.

The following question is related to your **expectation** towards the courier services provider when there is a failure.

**When you for the first time contacted the courier services provider (verbally or by writing) in relation to your complaint:**

Low  
degree

High  
degree

SR1	To which degree were you counting on that company to give you a good explanation for what happened?	1	2	3	4	5
SR2	To which degree were you counting on that company to apologize for what happened?	1	2	3	4	5
SR3	To which degree were you counting on that company to show understanding for your complaint?	1	2	3	4	5
SR4	To which degree were you counting on that company to do anything in its capacity to make you satisfied?	1	2	3	4	5

#### Section 5: Price fairness

Please assess the price fairness you experienced with your courier service provider **with reference on question 7 in Section 1 (Most frequent used)**.

Very  
Unfair

Very  
Fair

PF1	How fair was the parcel charges charged by the courier services provider?	1	2	3	4	5
-----	---	---	---	---	---	---

Strongly  
Disagree

Strongly  
Agree

PF2	The price that were charged for the parcel represents a fair price.	1	2	3	4	5
-----	---	---	---	---	---	---

		Very Unacceptable			Very Acceptable		
PF3	How acceptable if the courier services provider charged your company more than the other companies?	1	2	3	4	5	

### Section6: Relationship benefits

Please assess the relationship benefits you experienced with courier services provider with reference on question 7 in Section 1 (Most frequent used).

		Strongly Disagree			Strongly Agree		
CB1	We know what to expect when we go in the couriers services office.	1	2	3	4	5	
CB2	This courier services provider employees are perfectly honest.	1	2	3	4	5	
CB3	This courier services provider employees can be trusted completely	1	2	3	4	5	
CB4	This courier services provider employees have high integrity	1	2	3	4	5	
SB1	We are recognized by certain employees.	1	2	3	4	5	
SB2	We enjoy certain social aspects of the relationship.	1	2	3	4	5	
SB3	We have developed a friendship with the courier service provider.	1	2	3	4	5	
SB4	We are familiar with the employee(s) that perform(s) the services.	1	2	3	4	5	
SB5	They know our names.	1	2	3	4	5	
STB1	We get faster service than most customers.	1	2	3	4	5	
STB2	We are usually placed higher on the priority list when there is a line.	1	2	3	4	5	

STB3	They do services for us that they don't do for most customers	1	2	3	4	5
STB4	We get discounts or special deals that most customers don't get.	1	2	3	4	5

### Section7: Relational Dependence

Please assess the relational dependence you experienced with courier services provider **with reference on question 7 in Section 1 (Most frequent used)**.

Strongly  
Disagree

Strongly  
Agree

RD1	This courier services provider is important to our business.	1	2	3	4	5
RD2	This courier services provider has services that provide us with a breadth of options.	1	2	3	4	5
RD3	This courier services provider is critical to our future financial performance	1	2	3	4	5
RD4	This courier services provider has a relationship with us that is critical to achieving the goals of our practice.	1	2	3	4	5
RD5	This courier services provider has services on which we depend to deliver our products to the customer.	1	2	3	4	5
RD6	This courier services provider has services that if no longer available, would have a negative effect on our businesses.	1	2	3	4	5

### Section 8: Customer retention

Please assess the likely of customer retention of courier services provider **with reference on question 7 in Section 1(Most frequent used)**.

Strongly  
Disagree

Strongly  
Agree

CR1	We expect our relationship with the courier services provider to continue for a long time.	1	2	3	4	5
CR2	Renewal of relationship with the courier services provider is virtually automatic.	1	2	3	4	5
CR3	It is unlikely that our firm will still be doing business with this company services in 2 years.	1	2	3	4	5

### Section 9: Word-of-mouth

Please assess the likely of word-of-mouth of courier services provider **with reference on question 7 in Section 1(Most frequent used)**.

Strongly  
Disagree

Strongly  
agree

WOM1	We will say positive things about the courier services provider to others.	1	2	3	4	5
WOM2	We will recommend this courier services provider to someone who seeks my advice.	1	2	3	4	5
WOM3	We will encourage friends and relatives to do business with this courier services provider.	1	2	3	4	5
WOM4	We will consider this courier services provider as our first priority.	1	2	3	4	5
WOM5	We will do more business with this courier services provider in the next few years.	1	2	3	4	5

**THANK YOU FOR YOUR COOPERATION**

## Appendix B: Descriptive Statistics for Demographic Variables

### GENDER

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	male	36	30.8	30.8	30.8
	female	81	69.2	69.2	100.0
	Total	117	100.0	100.0	

### AGE

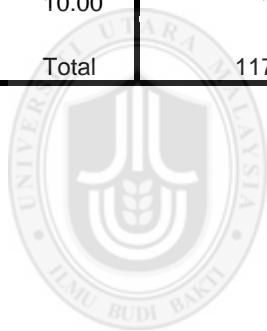
		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	20-25	33	28.2	28.2	28.2
	26-30	53	45.3	45.3	73.5
	31-35	24	20.5	20.5	94.0
	Above 36	7	6.0	6.0	100.0
	Total	117	100.0	100.0	

### EDUCATION

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	SPM/STPM	30	25.6	25.6	25.6
	Diploma	41	35.0	35.0	60.7
	Degree	45	38.5	38.5	99.1
	Master/Phd	1	.9	.9	100.0
	Total	117	100.0	100.0	

**YEARS**

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	1.00	13	11.1	11.1	11.1
	2.00	28	23.9	23.9	35.0
	3.00	26	22.2	22.2	57.3
	4.00	18	15.4	15.4	72.6
	5.00	19	16.2	16.2	88.9
	6.00	6	5.1	5.1	94.0
	7.00	3	2.6	2.6	96.6
	8.00	3	2.6	2.6	99.1
	10.00	1	.9	.9	100.0
	Total	117	100.0	100.0	



**UUM**  
Universiti Utara Malaysia



## Appendix C: Test of Harman's Single factor

Total Variance Explained						
Component	Initial Eigenvalues			Extraction Sums of Squared Loadings		
	Total	% of Variance	Cumulative %	Total	% of Variance	Cumulative %
1	12.702	18.146	18.146	12.702	18.146	18.146
2	6.959	9.941	28.087			
3	4.118	5.883	33.970			
4	3.710	5.299	39.269			
5	2.890	4.129	43.398			
6	2.587	3.696	47.094			
7	2.122	3.032	50.126			
8	2.069	2.955	53.081			
9	1.833	2.618	55.700			
10	1.727	2.467	58.167			
11	1.661	2.373	60.540			
12	1.643	2.346	62.886			
13	1.432	2.045	64.932			
14	1.380	1.971	66.903			
15	1.336	1.909	68.812			
16	1.247	1.782	70.593			
17	1.138	1.626	72.219			
18	1.088	1.554	73.773			
19	1.010	1.443	75.216			
20	.955	1.364	76.580			
21	.948	1.355	77.935			
22	.892	1.275	79.209			
23	.849	1.213	80.423			

24	.789	1.128	81.550			
25	.770	1.100	82.650			
26	.711	1.015	83.665			
27	.700	1.001	84.665			
28	.667	.953	85.618			
29	.652	.932	86.550			
30	.596	.852	87.402			
31	.585	.836	88.238			
32	.542	.774	89.011			
33	.512	.732	89.743			
34	.500	.714	90.457			
35	.460	.658	91.115			
36	.437	.624	91.738			
37	.409	.585	92.323			
38	.398	.569	92.892			
39	.387	.552	93.444			
40	.359	.512	93.956			
41	.339	.485	94.441			
42	.312	.446	94.887			
43	.300	.429	95.315			
44	.273	.390	95.705			
45	.263	.375	96.080			
46	.237	.338	96.419			
47	.229	.328	96.746			
48	.213	.305	97.051			
49	.196	.280	97.331			
50	.188	.269	97.600			
51	.175	.251	97.850			
52	.157	.224	98.074			
53	.142	.203	98.278			

54	.135	.193	98.470			
55	.132	.189	98.659			
56	.117	.167	98.826			
57	.108	.154	98.981			
58	.108	.154	99.134			
59	.085	.122	99.256			
60	.085	.121	99.378			
61	.080	.114	99.492			
62	.075	.107	99.599			
63	.059	.084	99.682			
64	.050	.072	99.754			
65	.042	.059	99.813			
66	.035	.050	99.864			
67	.032	.046	99.910			
68	.028	.040	99.950			
69	.021	.030	99.980			
70	.014	.020	100.000			

Extraction Method: Principal Component Analysis.